

Stewardship Authority

The Forest acting alone cannot achieve the proposed actions designed to meet the goals of increasing health and diversity of stands or the other actions identified. The proposal is to offer the rights to remove and utilize the timber to qualified contractors in exchange for accomplishing the variable-density thinning and other important work. The Forest typically uses a mix of traditional Timber Sale Contracts and Stewardship Contracts. The type of contract used is typically based on site-specific circumstances. Since stewardship contracting is new to some, the following is a brief overview comparing the contract types.

Legislation permanently authorizing stewardship contracting was included in the 2014 Farm Bill. It allows the Forest Service to enter into contracts to meet land-management objectives to reduce wildland fire risk and improve forest health. Stewardship contracts focus on producing desired results on the ground that improve forest health, restore resources and provide benefits to local communities. Among other things, the stewardship contracting authority allows the value of forest products to be exchanged for ecological restoration services. Some key factors to qualify for stewardship contracting are that the logging component has some restorative elements and that a collaborative public participation process occurs. These things are not required for traditional timber sale contracting and a timber sale contractor cannot be required to do projects unrelated to the timber removal.

Traditional Timber Sale contracts are still an important tool and are used where appropriate. These contracts typically return monetary value to federal and local governments, and allow the Forest to retain funds for post-contract work. In traditional timber sale contracting, the contract is awarded to the high bidder; whereas stewardship contracts are awarded on a best value basis. The award of a stewardship contract is based on a proposal that addresses five factors, including how they would utilize the local work force to accomplish the work. Stewardship contracts also can include required stewardship projects to achieve a wide range of restoration objectives. Recent stewardship projects have included fire hazard reduction, huckleberry enhancement, road repairs, road decommissioning, snag creation, precommercial thinning, culvert upgrades, riparian planting, stream restoration, and restoration of unauthorized off-highway vehicle damage. Stewardship contracting authority also allows for any cash value that remains after funding the required stewardship projects to be retained and pooled with the receipts retained from other stewardship contracts. This pool of money is used to pay for restoration projects, even ones that are off-Forest. Some large projects require the pooled funding from several stewardship contracts.

The stewardship authority has a key collaborative element; local collaborative groups help the agency evaluate restoration proposals. One local group is the Clackamas Stewardship Partners (CSP). The Clackamas Stewardship Partners is a collaborative group that describes itself as “a group of diverse stakeholders dedicated to restoring ecological function of the Clackamas River Basin while benefiting local economies.” CSP meetings are open to the public. The CSP has a wide range of diverse participation such as environmental groups, the Clackamas River Basin Council, local water providers, Clackamas County, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, local sawmills, and hunting groups. The Forest has been collaborating with this group since 2004. The CSP is typically involved with most projects and sponsors field trips each summer. The CSP has collaborated on several million dollars of stewardship projects that have been

generated through stewardship contracting in the Clackamas basin. Recent stewardship contracts have provided retained receipts funding that was pooled and used as matching dollars to leverage more funding for larger projects. For example, culverts that were blocking fish passage where Porter Road crosses Delph Creek were replaced by a bridge. This off-Forest project was facilitated by CSP with \$90,000 of retained receipts from Stewardship Contracts that leveraged the \$355,000 of the total cost for the project.